

# Veteran Updates

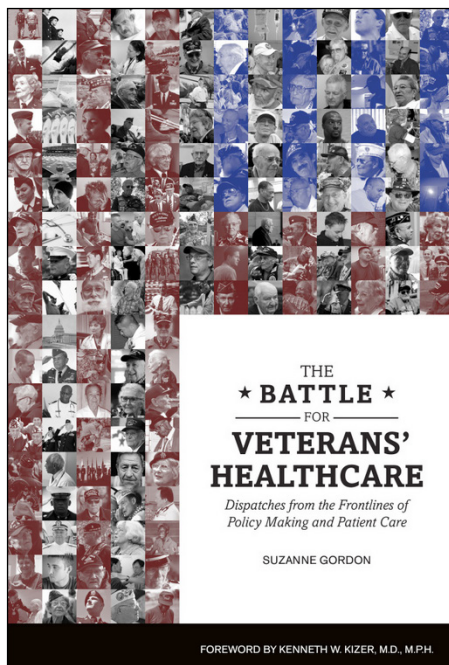
News and updates on Veterans issues from the San Francisco VA Health Care System • April 2017

## Suzanne Gordon Visits SFVA Medical Center

The San Francisco VA Health Care System was proud to welcome award-winning author and journalist Suzanne Gordon, who came to speak to staff and Veterans on April 10.

Suzanne is the author of 18 books and has written for the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *American Prospect* and many others. She is the co-editor of the Culture and Politics of Healthcare Work series at Cornell University Press. She has lectured worldwide on health care issues and has appeared frequently on radio and TV. Throughout her career, Suzanne has become an ardent defender and supporter of the Veterans Health Administration and our high quality of care and innovative work we do for our Veterans. Her latest book, *The Battle for Veterans' Healthcare: Dispatches from the Frontlines of Policy Making and Patient Care*, focuses heavily on the San Francisco VA Health Care System. We were glad to have her talk about her research process and tell our Veterans and staff why she wanted to write about the VA.

During her talk, Suzanne expressed the appreciation she has for the staff who provide care for Veterans all throughout the VA system. **"I see time and time again what dedication to your mission you all have,"** says Suzanne. **"You are driven by an intrinsic motivation to care for your Veterans."**

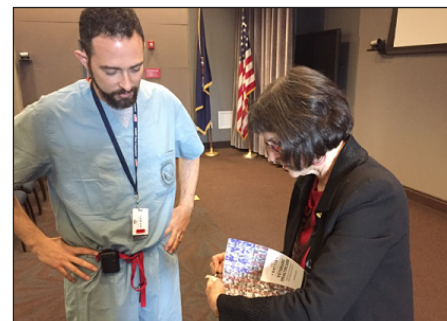


**That's more powerful than any kind of monetary incentive."**

She pointed out that Veterans are always happy to talk to her about their experiences with VA healthcare. On several occasions while sitting in the San Francisco VA Medical Center Canteen, Veterans have approached Suzanne to talk about how SFVAMC providers have helped them overcome their health challenges and improve their quality of life. "When one Veteran starts talking, another one is ready to chime in," says Suzanne. "The sense of community and camaraderie is incredible. It's definitely not something you see in patient waiting areas in the private sector."

Suzanne also admires the truly comprehensive array of services the VA is able to provide Veterans. In the San Francisco VA Health Care System, Veterans have access to an internal referral network that covers everything from audiology and optometry to highly specialized services in our National Centers of Excellence for Epilepsy Treatment, Cardiac Surgery, and more. Veterans even have access to less obvious services like cooking classes and tango lessons. "I definitely don't have this kind of access as a patient in private sector health care," says Suzanne.

Suzanne also engaged in a lively Q&A session with the audience and raffled off four copies of her book to lucky attendees. She is currently working on another book about the high quality of VA health care that will also feature the San Francisco VA Health Care System. We thank Suzanne for shining a light on the great work our employees do for our Veterans!



Author Suzanne Gordon signs a copy of her book, *The Battle for Veterans' Healthcare*, for SFVAHCS staff member Jordan Brand.

**A**pril is Alcohol Awareness Month, designed to raise public awareness about the use of alcohol and how it can affect individuals, families, and the community. Just about everyone has already seen the direct and indirect damage that alcohol abuse can cause, but we don't always apply that awareness to our own situation. Even if you don't drink alcohol, or are a moderate drinker, it's important to be aware of alcohol's risks, because if it's an issue for a family member or co-worker, it also affects you.

Per the World Health Organization (WHO), 3.3 million deaths occur each year from the harmful use of alcohol. Alcohol consumption is considered risky if one consumes more than 3 to 4 drinks per day. This amount may be lower based on a person's increased age, family history of alcohol problems, or a person may be allergic to any amount of alcohol.

The problems associated with heavy drinking are many. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, some effects may include: liver damage; diabetes; damage to memory; cancers of the mouth, esophagus, throat, liver and breast; damage to fetus in pregnant women; sleep disorders; stroke; high blood pressure; irregular heartbeat; a weakened immune system, and interference with the

brain's communication pathways. Per WHO, "Beyond health consequences, the harmful use of alcohol brings significant social and economic losses to individuals and society at large."

Whether it's your own level of alcohol use or that of a friend or loved one, it's important to be aware of the amount of alcohol consumed and its effects. Help is available from a variety of sources, including your VA primary care provider, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ([www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)), or you may have an Employee Assistance Program at your place of employment.

Addiction Recovery Treatment Services (ARTS) are readily available at the San Francisco VA Medical

Center (SFVAMC). The ARTS program offers treatment for people who have found their use of alcohol or drugs has caused them significant distress or impairment with negative effects on family, personal relationships, health or work. Treatment services are structured to care for people through all stages of recovery.

There are specialized groups available at the Community Living Center, Primary Care, Women's Health Center, Mental Health, and the Infectious Disease Clinic for Veterans thinking about changing their substance use, as well as a number of ongoing drop-in groups. Ask your VA provider for more information.



## Upcoming Pharmacy Remodel

The San Francisco VA Medical Center will soon begin an exciting project to modernize its outpatient pharmacy. During this time, the outpatient pharmacy will be closed beginning August 1, 2017. During this time, a temporary pharmacy pickup point will be established in Bldg. 200, Room 1A-122. Signage will be posted to direct Veterans to the temporary pharmacy location. We will provide more details as they become available.

